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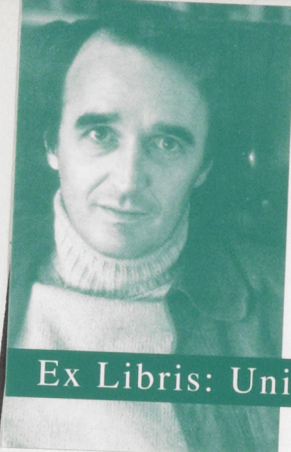


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*The  
History  
of the  
Eastern  
Irrigation  
District*

*25th Anniversary  
May 1st, 1960  
Brooks, Alberta*





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**Richard Spafford**

Western Canadian Legacy Collection

*Education is the progressive discovery of our own ignorance.*  
—Will Durant

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# ALBERTA

SHOWING  
EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT

EDMONTON

DRUMHELLER

CALGARY

BROOKS

MEDICINE HAT

LETHBRIDGE

BOW RIVER

RED DEER RIVER

OLDMAN

OLDMAN

BELLY RIVER

ST. MARYS

EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT

SASKATCHEWAN



*The  
History  
of the  
Eastern  
Irrigation  
District*

*25th Anniversary  
May 1st, 1960  
Brooks, Alberta*





Published under the direction of the Board of Trustees, Eastern Irrigation District, Brooks, Alberta.

Bryce C. Stringam, chairman.

Harvey Henrickson.

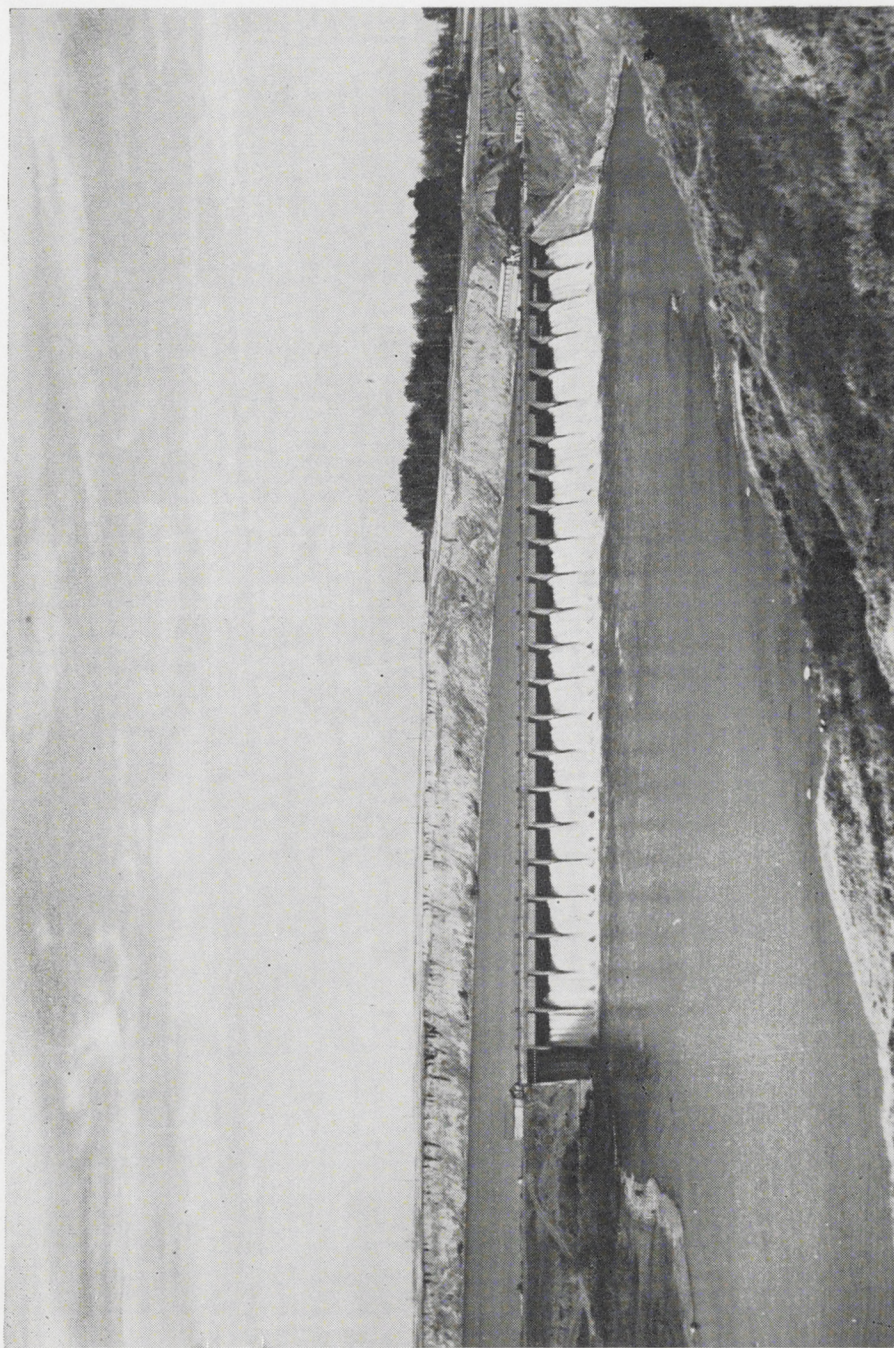
Robert Daniels.

Soren Petersen.

George I. Penner.

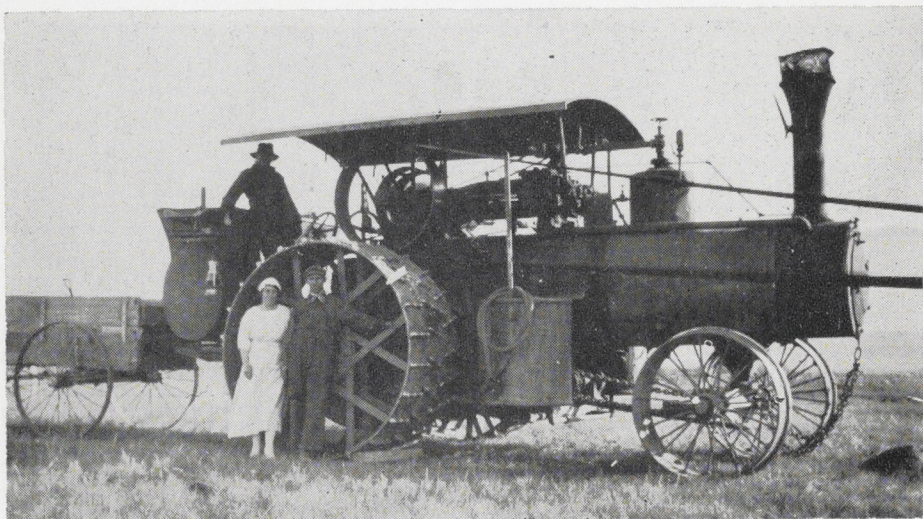




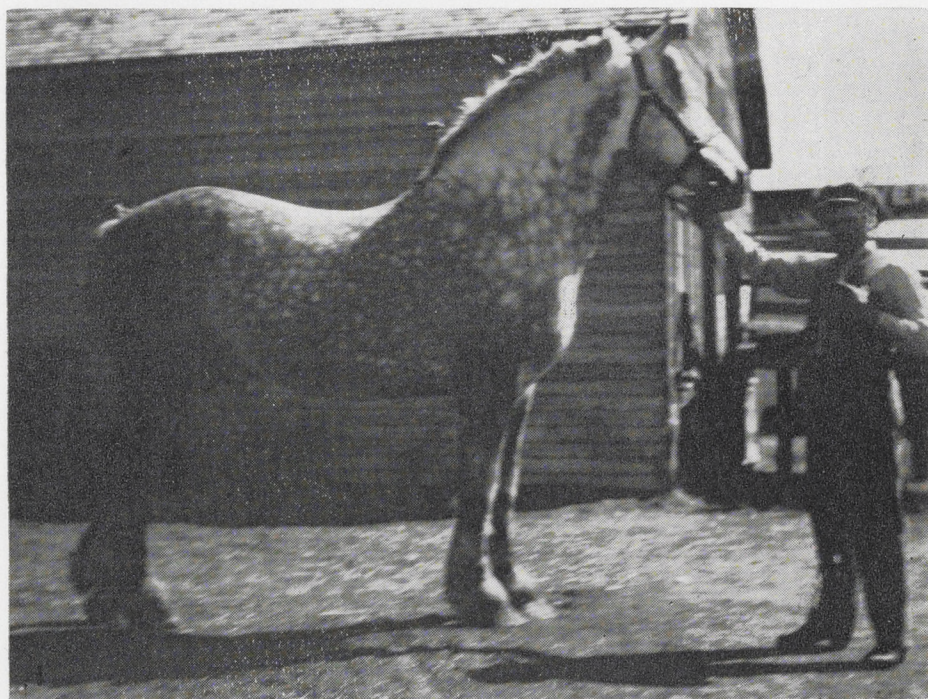


BASSANO DAM SUPPLIES WATER FOR THE IRRIGATION DISTRICT



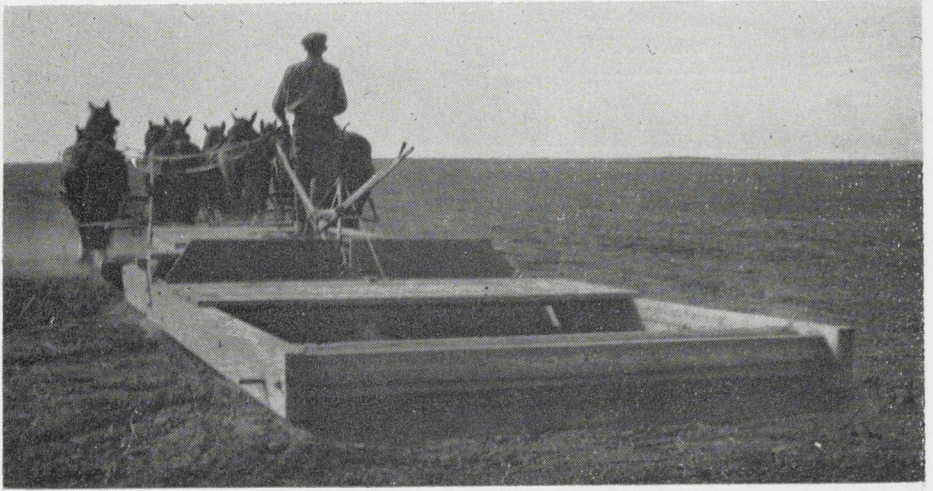


Early Bow City threshing outfit.

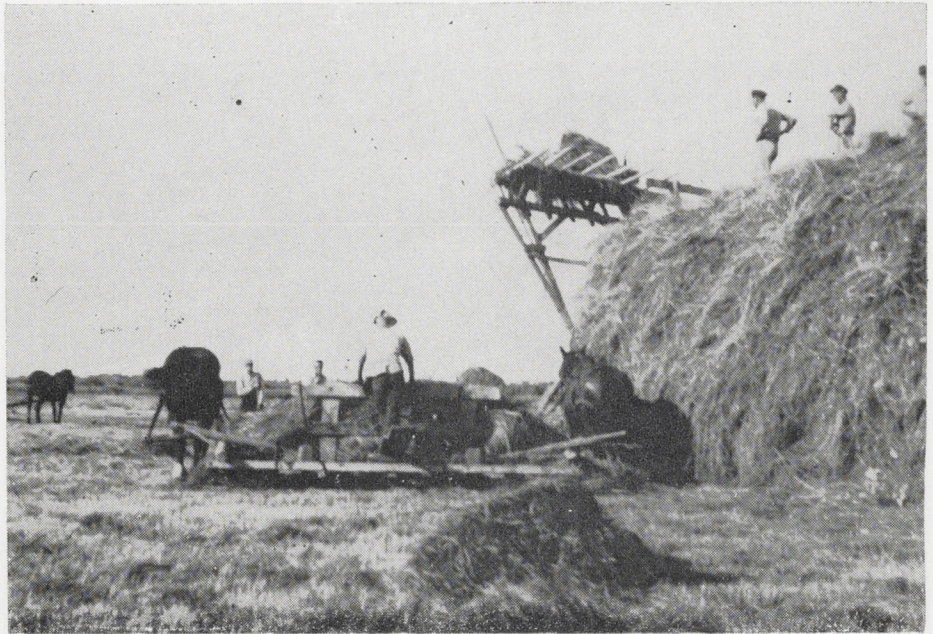


A. L. Young's champion stallion, 1925.





First land levelling at Duchess.



Early naying.





Sheep feeding in the E.I.D.



To hold his job in early days, a ditchrider had to break his horse to drive.





We were progressive in 1919 also!



Exchange hair cuts.





Scandia pioneers (first church council).

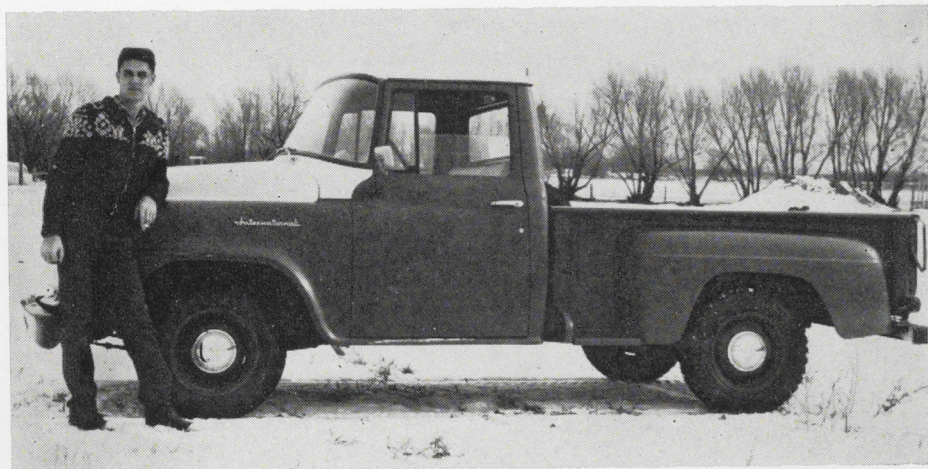


Brooks garden.





One-man harvesting outfit.



A modern ditchrider looks over his field.





Cattle feeding, 1920.



Modern farm home.





Brooks ice supply, 1924.



Antelope of early days in E.I.D.





THE TWO-MILE LONG BROOKS AQUEDUCT.





Power unit — 1919.



Sam Ramer trying to sell land to  
Lee Trimmer.



Primitive refrigeration.

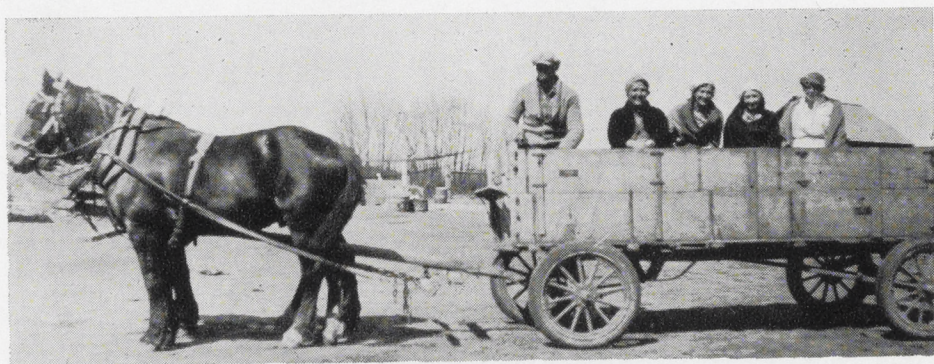




Part of Andrew Young's herd in 1950.

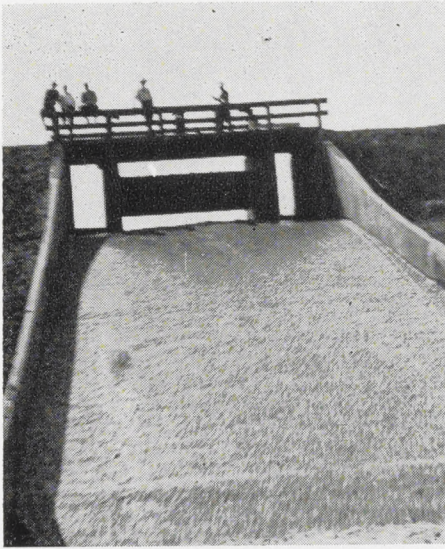


Preparing to haul grain to market.



Tilley transportation, 1938.

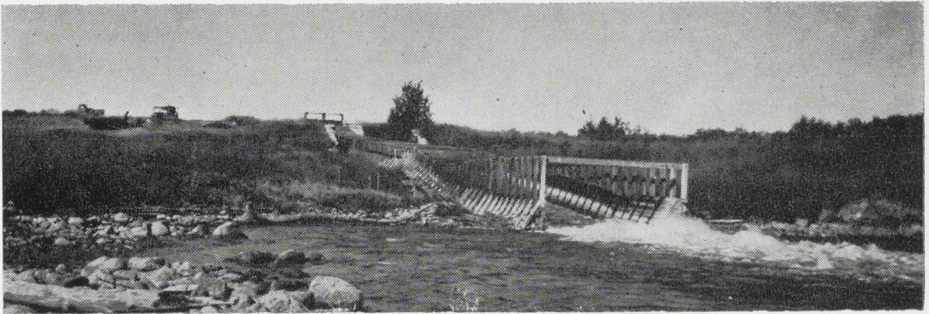




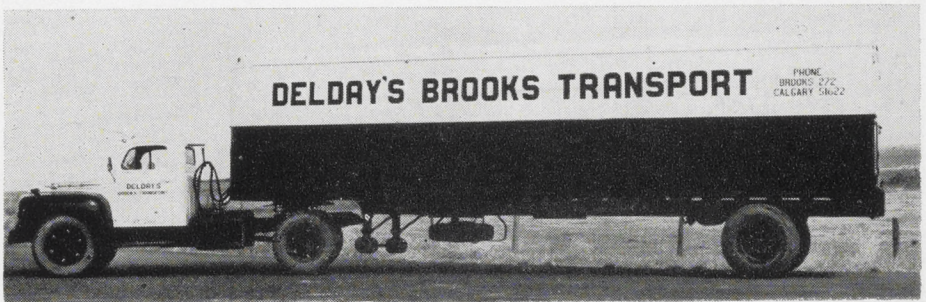
Spring Hills Canal, 1935



Ditchrider waiting for the school marm.

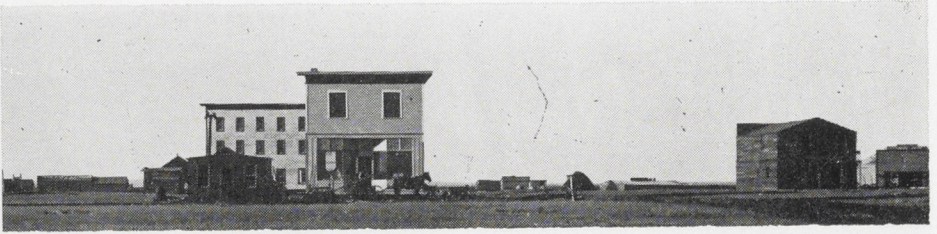


Spring Hills Canal, 1957.



Freight van used to haul potatoes, 1959.

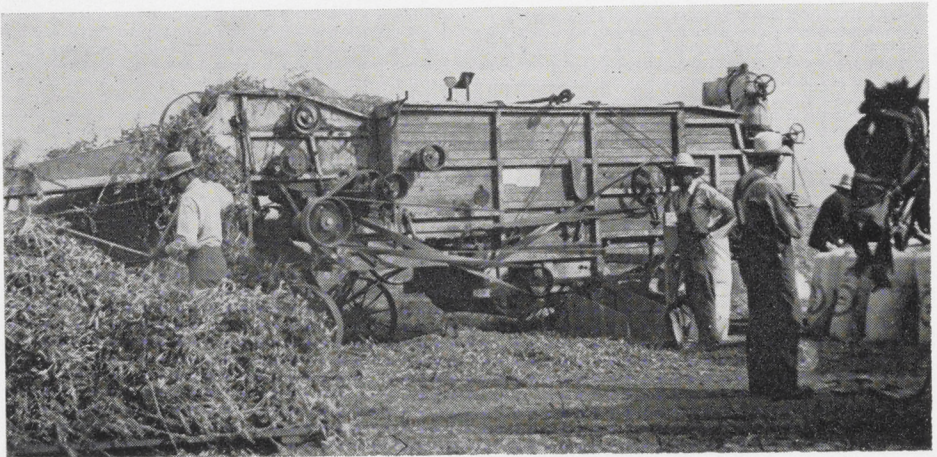




Bow City ghost town, 1914.

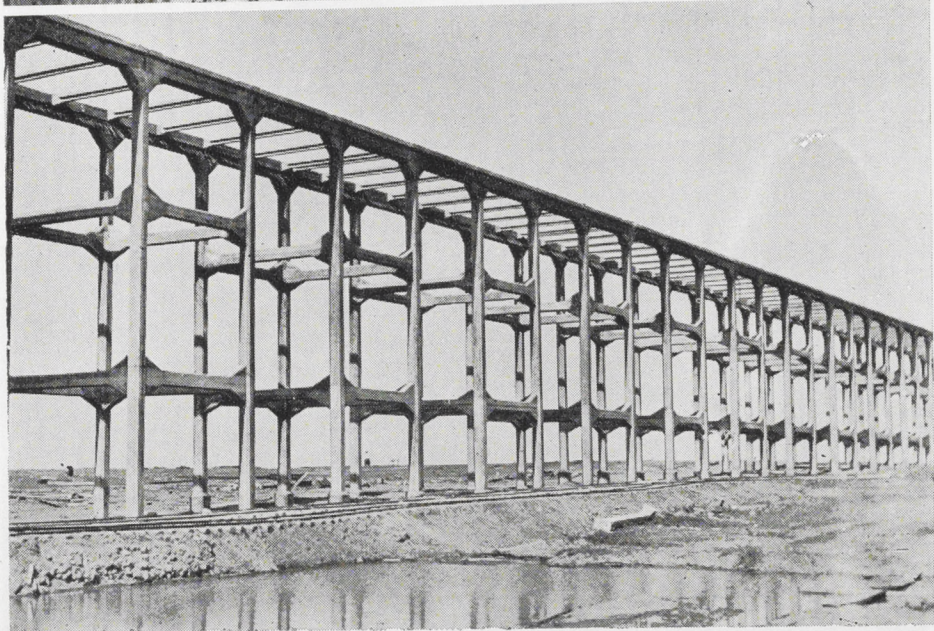
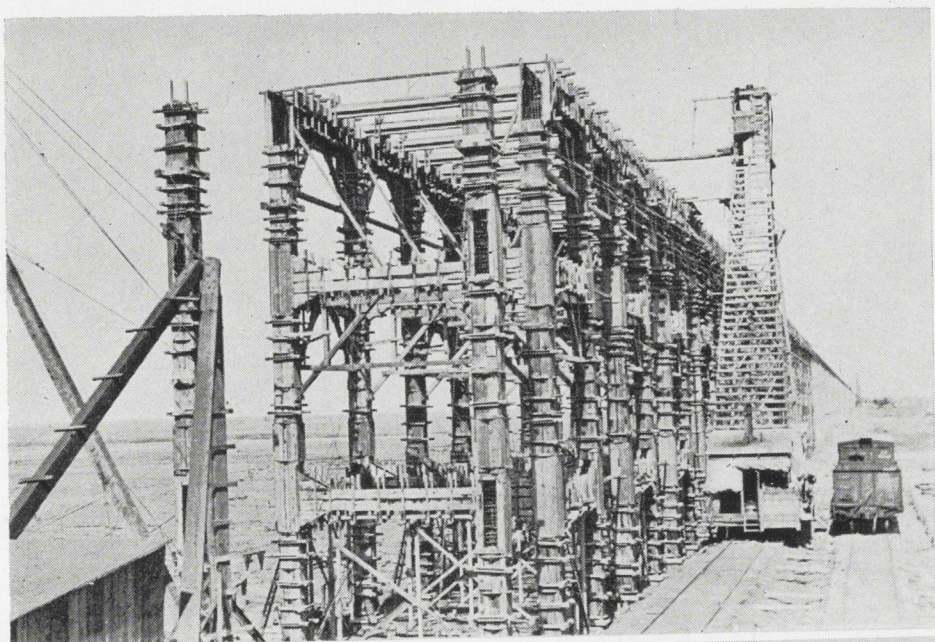


Moving hay in the winter time.



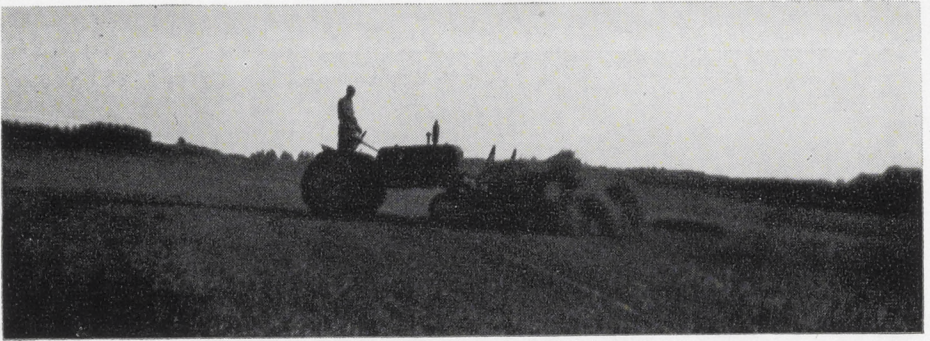
Threshing seed peas at Duchess.





Constructing the Brooks Aqueduct, 1911 to 1914.





Haying in Tilley, 1944.



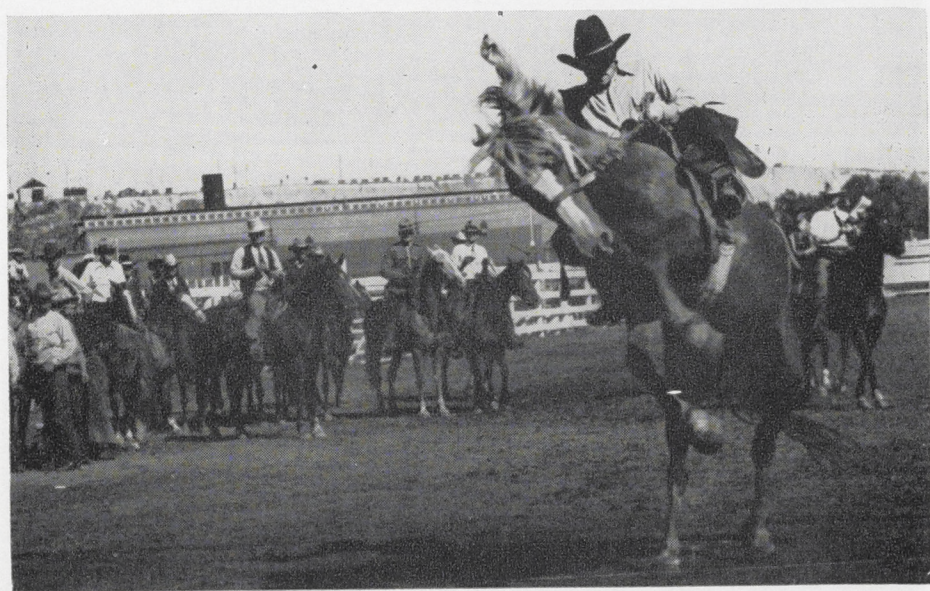




Brooks eminent gardener.

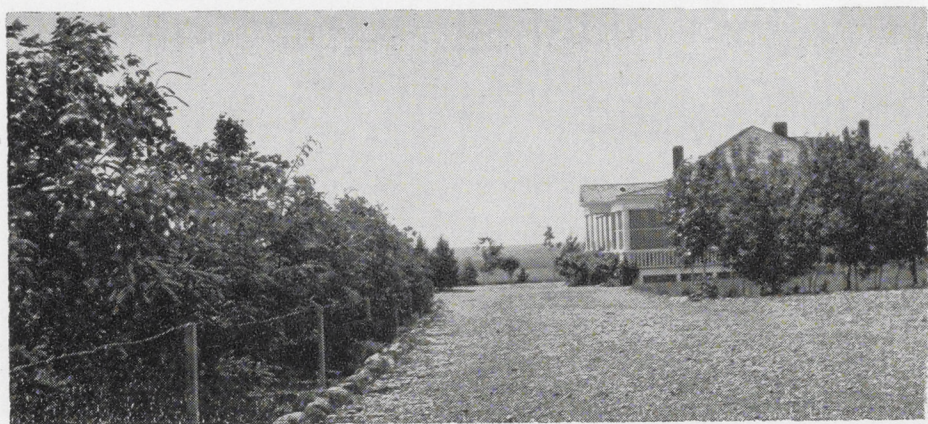


Cecil Young (was) riding Grizzly,  
Cliff Sewall's bronc, at Calgary,  
1933.



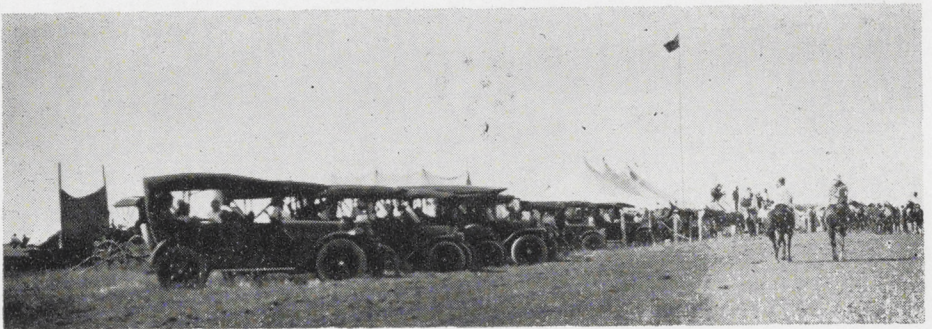
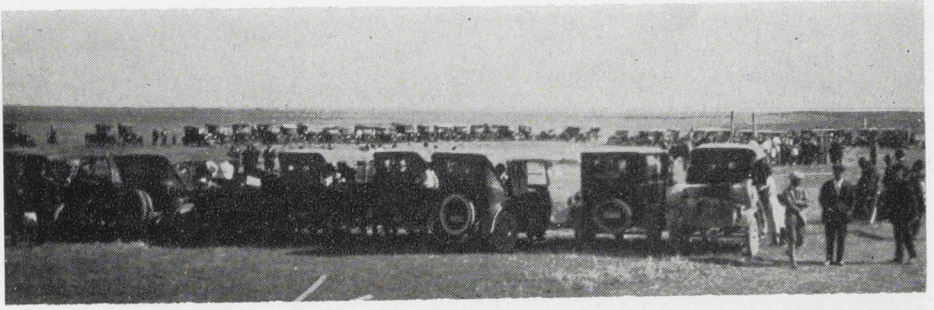
George Hoadley's bronc in the 1934 Calgary Stampede.





Brooks Headquarters, 1920.





Brooks Sports Days.





Bad Lands of the Red Deer River.

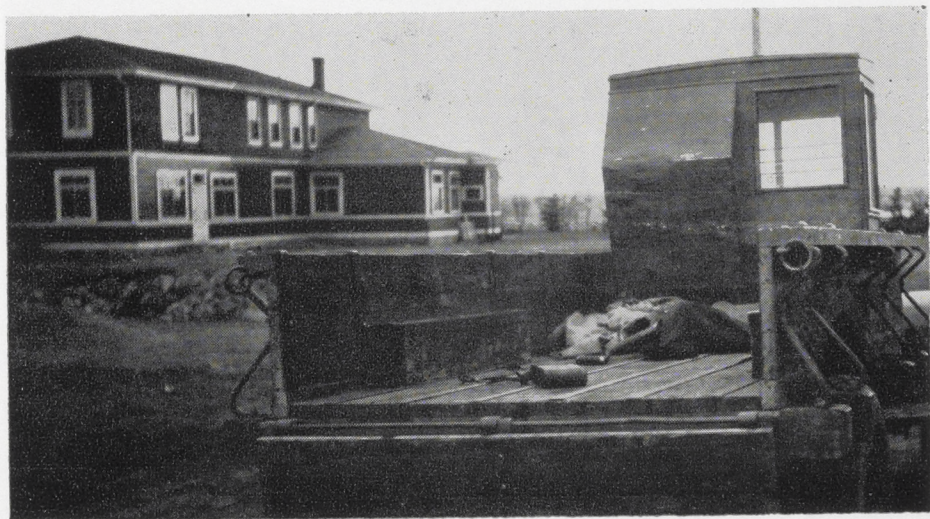


Duchess youngsters are flexible!





Threshing at Rosemary, 1919.



Nash truck at Headquarters, 1920.





Haying in Tilley, 1929.



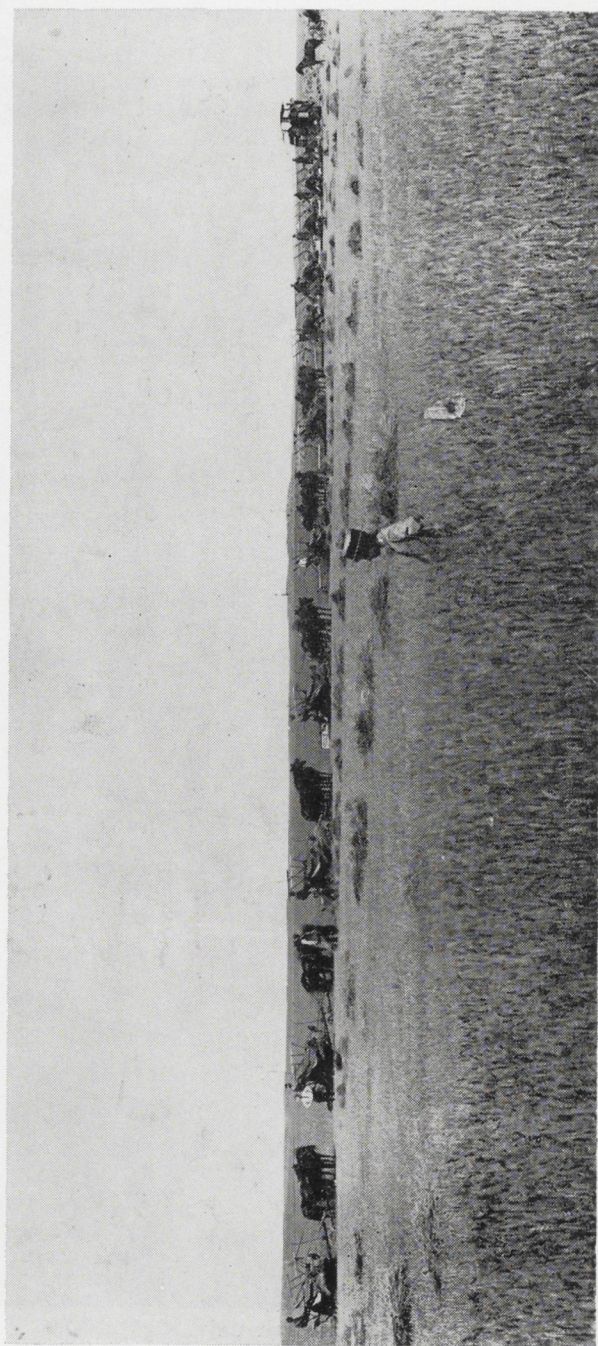
Livestock man of the future.





School fair days.





CUTTING GRAIN AT DUKE OF SUTHERLAND'S, 1917.



# *A History of the Eastern Irrigation District*



Visitors travelling through the irrigated areas of Southern Alberta are delighted with the beauty of the windbreaks of trees surrounding impressive farmsteads, linked together with a network of irrigation canals. As some of these growths are mature and others seem recently planted, and as they all offer comfort and protection to attractive farm homes, the question arises as to who planted these trees and helped transform the prairie into a place of charm.

In talking with the residents of this community, one notices, especially in the old timers, a certain pride of accomplishment and of ability to overcome difficulties. Therefore, we are endeavoring to relate in a very brief fashion some of the events that led to the formation of the Eastern Irrigation District, and a few of the many struggles the District residents went through before and during its first twenty five years of operation.

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The area comprising the Eastern Irrigation District is bounded on the north by the Red Deer River and on the south, south west by the Bow River. The western boundary, starting at Bassano, runs in a northeasterly direction to the Red Deer River. The eastern boundary is some twelve miles due east of Tilley running north to the Red Deer River and south to Township 13, which is a short way north of the Bow River at that point.

This 1,250,000 acre project is some of the grant of land the Canadian Pacific Railway was given by the Dominion Government as part payment for the construction of the trans-continental railway in the 1880's. With its fairly level topography, brown soil and semi-arid climate, this land is quite similar to the balance of that contained in the Palliser Triangle.

## **CONSTRUCTION STARTED 1909**

Until and before the 1900 era, the entire area was good range land with insufficient rainfall to justify normal dry farming practices. Consequently, after extensive surveys during 1908 and 1909, the Canadian Pacific Railway decided to create the Eastern Irrigation system. In 1909 it commenced the erection of the Bassano Dam and the construction of some 3,000 miles of ditches, to make approximately one-third of this land irrigable. The construction proceeded from 1909 to 1914. That was an interesting period. Very few people lived here except ranchers who had headquarters along the rivers, and to see the many horse-drawn outfits that were making ditches in various parts of this large area must have been amusing to the old time cowboys, many of whom had the idea that irrigation would be a costly experiment.



The construction methods used at the Bassano Dam and the Brooks Aqueduct proved that the contractors knew about sound methods of building. The labor saving devices, so common today, were not in vogue at that time. The camps of men at Bassano, Brooks and Tilley created a mild boom condition in parts of this district that dissipated in 1914 at the beginning of the World War.

### **WATER ARRIVES AT GEM**

In order to procure settlers for this newly created irrigable area, the Canadian Pacific Railway did extensive advertising in the United States and England. The first settlers arrived in Gem in the spring of 1914, many of them coming from irrigable areas in Colorado. The advantages of living in this new country were extolled so highly that we must admit that salesmen of that day had very vivid imaginations. In June of 1914, the first irrigation water, diverted by the Dam, was sent to Gem for use by the new settlers. On virgin soil, and in a good growing season, the first crops were good.

\* \* \*

### **THE WAVE OF SETTLEMENT**

Other settlers arrived in the Duchess and Rosemary area in 1915 from other locations in the Western States, so that by the end of 1915, the Canadian Pacific Railway reported some 60 irrigable farms as being occupied on the entire project. Further settlement was delayed owing to the First World War, but in 1917 three parcels of land were sold in the Bow Slope area to Minnesota people, and four or five at Duchess to Kansas and Pennsylvania people, and with about an equal amount in both locations, in 1918. In 1919, the Rosemary, Cassils, Rainier, Scandia, Duchess, Millicent, Brooks and Patricia areas experienced quite a wave of settlement which continued through 1920. Many of these people came from the Western part of the United States although several families of French people arrived here from Quebec. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company had constructed some 25 ready-made farms in the South Tilley area for the eventual use of returned soldiers from the World War. The soldiers did not care for these farms. Most of these parcels were operated by the Company until 1927 and 1928, when several were sold to dryland settlers from the Alderson-Medicine Hat areas. But the greatest number of settlers in the Tilley area arrived in 1929 and 1930, some of them from Southern Europe, and many from the State of Nebraska. Several American and most of the French settlers had left the Rosemary and Gem community by this time and a new group of settlers from Germany and Southern Russia came into the Rosemary and south Gem areas in 1929 and 1930.

\* \* \*

### **THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND**

One very important factor in the growth of this project could be related by the story of the Duke of Sutherland. The Duke purchased 6,800 acres of the best land a few miles north of Brooks in 1911 and commenced dry farming operations, well knowing that eventually much of this land would be irrigated. By 1915 when irrigation construction had been fairly well completed, the Duke's holdings were about 5,000 acres of irrigable land and about 1,000 acres of non-irrigable land. The Duke assisted several agricultural families to come to the Brooks area from England and Scotland. These people went on farms in some of the Duke's development. The beautiful crops that were being raised under irrigation in 1917 and 1918 on the Duke's farm proved, to the satisfaction of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, the wisdom of developing this land for



irrigation purposes. The Duke-of-Sutherland-farmers first used irrigation water in the summer of 1915, but as that was a year of heavy rainfall, the water was mainly used for alfalfa, of which they had a considerable acreage.

The Duke ran as many as 2,000 cattle for a considerable time, and the hogs from his farm were shipped in carload lots. He had the best horses and equipment to be found in the entire country. After the death of the Duke, the farm was advertised for sale in 1930, and in 1935, was purchased by the Trustees of the newly formed Irrigation District and subdivided into many regular sized parcels.

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Each individual hamlet or district could write quite a story of the experiences and hardships undergone in the transition of the prairie to productive farms. Many of the settlers came from cities and had very little agricultural background, but fortunately, most districts had men of farming experience, who had successfully developed new land in other places. These men, aided by the Agricultural Board of the Railway Company, succeeded in creating a very productive agricultural economy.

### **TRANSPORTATION DIFFICULTIES**

Some of the first problems to overcome were the poor road conditions that were being experienced everywhere. The district was growing so fast that funds were not available for road construction. The settlers were located usually on the best land which was quite often distant from the towns and railroads of early years. Horse and wagon were the main means of transportation. The very few trucks in use could not stand up to the rigors of the prairie roads. It was a common sight to view eight to ten outfits of farm wagons or grain tanks made up of four, six and eight horse teams hauling grain to, and supplies from, the major shipping points. Building and fencing supplies, groceries and clothes, and the necessary supplies of coal, were all transported by horse and wagon, often under many difficulties on primitive roads.

### **EARLY DOCTORS**

Owing to road conditions and slow transportation facilities, the early settlers did not admit to themselves any minor sickness or ailment. Possibly because of the average youthful age of the settlers, combined with the healthy atmosphere in a new country, there was very little sickness. Great credit is given to Dr. A. G. Scott of Bassano and the late Dr. C. E. Anderson of Brooks for the unswerving and unselfish work these men performed, often under great difficulties, when the settlers were forced to call them.

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### **THE SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES**

The next serious problem was that of schools. The settlers were faced with the formation of school districts, the construction of schools and the procurement of teachers. These tasks were formidable, and the teachers in those early, difficult days, trying to impose a Canadian course of study on children from so many different localities, no doubt had a serious problem. Some of the school districts, consolidated with the idea of better instruction, had problems of children getting to school, which were often serious. Volunteer or low paid bus drivers saw to it that the pupils got to school even in the worst weather in the



winter, but many youngsters furnished their own transportation with saddle horses or horse and buggy. These methods of transportation in severe weather were a hardship on the children, and would be scorned today. However, a remarkable self-reliance was developed in many of the youngsters which has carried them ahead in later life.

The early pioneers quickly established places of worship, which in most instances were in local schools. Often times attendance at church furnished not only religious instruction but up-to-date information on the latest happenings throughout the area. As time progressed and economic conditions improved, small churches were built in many of the communities.

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In early days, mail was delivered to Gem from Bassano and to Rainier and Scandia from Brooks by horses and democrats. Mail service was not too regular in some of the districts, but was supposed to operate twice weekly, often depending on train service and weather conditions. Frequently the mail carriers were expected to haul passengers in emergency, and their willingness in that regard was a boon to many.

### **RAILWAY SPUR LINES**

The Gem and Rainier-Scandia settlements were isolated by distance until 1927, when branch railway lines were built into their respective locations. These branch line railways furnished the settlers with a cheaper and easier method of disposing of the crops they were growing and of procuring supplies. The hamlets of Gem, Rainier and Scandia, developed after the arrival of the railroad. The other parts of the project were built adjoining railroads that were in operation before the project commenced.

An interesting annual activity of those early years was the formation and operation of the annual school fair. These school fairs offered rivalry in not only school work, but garden and some livestock projects for the youngsters over the entire district and they furnished a medium of competition between schools that had high value. The calisthenic training and competitions between school children on fair day was an interesting exhibition, always watched by many onlookers.

### **FIRST CROPS**

The crops grown by the early settlers were mainly flax for the first year or two, and then wheat and oats, and after a few years, considerable alfalfa seed was harvested. Excellent garden stuff and potato crops were the mainstay of many a farm family in those early years. A Dominion Irrigation Experiment Station, and experimental plots operated by the C.P.R. furnished valuable advice on the suitability of various crops and how and when to apply water for best results. Many settlers took advantage of these facilities.

### **END OF FREE GRAZING**

It took about five or six years before the settlers ventured into growing hogs, cattle and sheep in any quantities. Practically surrounding each settlement were large tracts of grazing land which were available for the newcomers' livestock. Numerous settlers were attracted to this area, in the first place, by the promise of free grazing on the vast quantities of land controlled by the Railway Company. However, upon imposition of taxes on this land in 1930, the Railway



Company decided to issue grazing leases, and the day of free grazing was over. Many new farmers in various parts of the district, adjacent to this grazing land, had discovered the advantages that accrue in balancing farm revenue by the growing and pasturing of livestock on this native grass. Some community leases were formed in 1930 and 1931, but these leases were abandoned with the resulting drop of livestock prices in 1932 and 1933. Before 1935 the Railway Company had leased approximately 1,000,000 acres of land surrounding the irrigable portions to both resident and non-resident livestock men.

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### **GRIMM ALFALFA SEED GROWERS**

By 1923, owing largely to the efforts of Don Bark of the Agricultural Branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, many farmers were growing Grimm Alfalfa for seed purposes. In order to assist themselves in the advertising and sale of this seed, the Grimm Alfalfa Seed Growers Association of Brooks was formed in 1923, as a seed growers co-operative venture. This organization was successful in assisting the farmers in specializing in Grimm alfalfa, and later on when alfalfa became plentiful, and the price dropped to low levels, in the production and marketing of seed peas. The stability of this organization has been of inestimable value to the farmers of this district.

At this same time, many settlers helped organize and joined the Alberta Wheat Pool, which has ever since dominated in maintaining a stabilizing effect on grain prices for all of Alberta.

### **FIRST LIVESTOCK FEEDER ASSOCIATION**

Following the collapse of alfalfa seed markets and because farmers needed to grow alfalfa to enrich and clean their soil, by 1930 and 1931 there was a surplus of hay throughout the district. Hay prices were low and livestock prices were also very low. Saskatchewan and Alberta cattle and sheep men were forced to take disastrous prices for feeder cattle and feeder lambs in the fall of 1931; subsequently, an interesting arrangement was made. The Brooks Livestock Feeder Association was formed, composed of farmers in this region having surplus hay, oats and barley, and ranchers in Saskatchewan and Alberta who had to dispose of feeder cattle and lambs. Arrangements between the ranchers and the farmers were such that the ranchers advanced their feeder livestock with no cash payment in the fall to the farmer members of the association, for feeding purposes; the rancher was paid in the spring for the pounds of livestock contributed on an agreed-on-percentage of the fat lamb or fat steer price, when the animal was sold. This association assisted greatly in disposing of surplus hay and grain for the next six or seven years, and was the foundation for experienced feeding operation in the bank-financed feeder associations which have been operating here since 1938. Many of today's successful livestock men give credit to the assistance that the association gave them in the days of the depression.

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The original contracts the settlers signed with the Railway Company called for a payment of \$50.00 per acre for irrigable land and \$25.00 per acre for the non-irrigable land, with a payment of 10% of the purchase price at the beginning of the contract. This contract was spread over 20 years with interest at 6%. Water rates were \$1.25 per acre. The Railway Company and the settlers soon found that this contract was impossible to fulfill.



## PRICE FALL ON FARM PRODUCTS

The early settlers had not made the financial progress that they and the Company had anticipated; economic conditions, right after the First War in 1921 and 1922, became very grave. Practically the only crop that, at that time, could be successfully grown and marketed was wheat. But in 1923 the price of wheat collapsed disastrously, and with it went the settlers' income. In the ten years from 1923 to 1933, many of the original settlers abandoned their farms and most of those remaining were disappointed and hurt in the low prices they continuously received for their agricultural products. The depression from 1931 to 1935 heightened the dissension that was in the minds of the people. In 1927 the Railway Company made certain adjustments on the original land contracts, but these adjustments were not enough to assure the settlers that they could ever pay for their homes. From 1930 to 1935, the Alberta farmer's actual net income was less than \$400.00 per year.

## THE PART OF THE U.F.A. LOCALS

Throughout the entire area, there had been established, in each little community, U.F.A. Locals. These locals were branches of the United Farmers of Alberta. In addition to helping iron out matters of local importance, such as the need for good roads, and better agriculture, one of the main items in these locals' agenda was the ever recurring discussion on how to get a better deal on their land from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

In 1928, the locals banded themselves together into a District U.F.A. organization, and the main clause in this organization's charter was to get a better land contract for the farmers from the Railway Company. Too many residents found that they could not live up to the contracts they had signed with the Railway Company and consequently did little to build homes or improve their farms.

Whenever the District Association wished to call an emergency meeting, communications to all farmers were procured by using the school children, church attendants, neighbors on horse back and Canadian Pacific Railway Company's ditchriders to carry messages.

## THE "LARGE" AND "SMALL" COMMITTEES

In an effort to get cohesion in the demands for better contracts from the Railway Company a large committee of seventeen men, comprising G. Grosfield, S. E. Selfridge, J. H. Edwards, F. D. Williamson, P. J. Stuhlsatz, A. M. Peterson, Jens Block, A. P. Miller, A. V. Farnsworth, George Snaith, J. G. Hall, Ralph Burrows, Robert Scott, Nels A. Benson, Anton Hellmer, John P. Loewen and D. J. Janzen, representing all the various localities in the district, were elected. These seventeen men were charged with the responsibility of achieving a better contract from the Canadian Pacific Railway with the elimination of the arrears of land principal, interest and water rate payments that had accrued. Many meetings were held from 1930 to 1934, but the Railway Company could not see its way clear to better the contract in force at that time. The Committee represented to the Railway Company that the terms of land payments must have been too harsh as less than twenty-five water users out of 700, after 15 years of occupancy, owned their property, and only another very small proportion had any equity on their farms. The Large Committee of seventeen, appointed a Small Committee of three: Carl J. Anderson, W. Tait White and R. H. Jones, to carry on negotiations with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The Small Committee was given the whole sum of \$40.00 to defray expenses



during the time of negotiations. Finally, the Railway Company told the Small Committee that the only way in which the Company would agree to change the contract was for the farmers of the Eastern Section to take over the responsibility of the delivery of water. The Small Committee was told that if the water users would assume this responsibility, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company would consider selling to the farmers' organization, which would have to be formed, all their interest in the land, then known as "The Eastern Section," staff houses presently occupied by the Company employees, and machinery sufficient to operate the district, for \$500,000.00. This had cost the Company between 14 and 17 million dollars. Subsequently, after a long study, the Small Committee, together with the Large Committee, decided to recommend the formation of a farmer-owned District to operate the project. Seventeen meetings were called throughout the Project to discuss with the farmers the proposition of forming an irrigation district, which would take over and operate the irrigation system. At these meetings farmers were told they would have an opportunity to vote on whether the District should be formed or not. If the vote was successful, and the District was formed, new land contracts, wiping out all debts owing the Railway Company, would be issued all water users. Under these contracts the top price for land would be \$10.00 per acre, but the farmers were also told they would have to be prepared to assume the actual cost of the delivery of water. At this time, in 1935, the actual cost of delivery of water was presumed to be somewhere between \$1.00 and \$1.80 per acre. The farmers were also informed that the Railway Company intended to insist on the farmers living up to their old contracts if they did not decide to accept this proposal which was being advanced by the Small Committee.

### MEETING PLACE

There arose considerable arguments and discussion throughout the entire district regarding the merits of the proposal. The idea that farmers could operate a project of this size in a more efficient manner than the Railway Company was absurd. Bankers promised no help and were very cool towards the proposal. Local business men, accustomed to the regularity of C.P.R. payroll economy, were skeptical. Jack O'Brien of Brooks welcomed the committees in his store constantly. Depression business was so poor and customers were so scarce that Jack had time to discuss with the committee members a line of action. Jack O'Brien's moral support and the use of his store for a meeting place were highly appreciated by all committee members. Many farmers were non-U.F.A. members and had not participated in the discussion as individuals; they were afraid of co-operation and they opposed the proposition strenuously.

### THE DEAL IS MADE

The Provincial Government, which was operating on a depression revenue, had not assisted the farmers in their negotiation in any way, but the Chairman of the Irrigation Council had been consulted by the Small Committee continuously. The only assistance the Province was able to give to the Small Committee was to appoint auditors to scrutinize the books and financial records of the Irrigation Division of the Railway Company. After six weeks of examination, the Government auditors gave the Committee information regarding collections and payments which led the members of the Committee to seriously revise the tentative deal with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Consequently, on the 4th day of March, 1935, accompanied by their solicitor, Mr. C. H. Powlett, the Small Committee, acting as the committee for the District farmers, negotiated a transaction with the Railway Company officials whereby the Railway Company agreed to transfer to the Trustees of the District the



entire Irrigation Block and grazing land as described in the original confines of the District, plus staff houses and office building and machinery to operate the District together with \$300,000.00 working capital.

### **SAVING AT THE SOURCE**

To the average person these terms appear very generous. However, by this transaction the Railway Company was relieved of the responsibility for the delivery of water to the settlers. This responsibility, entered into with enthusiasm years earlier in an attempt to procure settlers, had been very costly to the Railway Company, and could be more expensive in the future. In voting to accept the above proposals many of the settlers, while not knowing much of the responsibility they were assuming, decided that a new deal of some kind was necessary if they were to ever own their farms. They showed confidence in their committee's action by voting for the formation of the District under the final terms negotiated. In these days of high pay for little work, it is hard to believe that after several visits in Calgary with the Railway Company, over twenty meetings throughout the Project, several small meetings with one another, the Committee negotiated one of the largest land deals of recent times and had six of the original forty dollars expense money on hand left for possible further negotiations.

\* \* \*

### **DISTRICT MANAGERS**

In the Session of the Provincial Legislature of 1935, the Province gave approval to the negotiators by passing the Eastern Irrigation District Act, which forced this area into an irrigation district. In the election for the Trustees that followed, Carl J. Anderson, Henry Dahl and Robert Scott were the successful candidates. The first Manager appointed by the Board was E. L. Gray, who took office in the summer of 1935 and who subsequently resigned in 1939. Mr. L. C. Charlesworth, who had been Director of Water Resources, was inducted to accept the position as Manager in the fall of 1939, and was in office until 1945. E. W. Brunsden served the District as Manager from April 1945 until September 1947. Carl J. Anderson was appointed General Manager to take office the 1st of October, 1947.

The first Engineer of the Project was Henry G. Angell, who left the District in the fall of 1935. Mr. Wesley Crook was appointed Chief Engineer of the Project following Mr. Angell's resignation and has continued in that position ever since.

The following men have served one or more times as trustees since the formation of the District: Carl J. Anderson, Robert Scott, Henry Dahl, Jens Block, Ralph Burrows, A. T. Johnson, George Woodward, Alex Garrow Sr., George Owens, Fred J. Wagstaff, Owen Stringam, C. O. Colbens, Arthur Larson, Bryce Stringam, George Penner, Harvey Henrickson, R. C. Daniels Jr. and Soren Petersen.

\* \* \*

### **INCREASE IRRIGABLE ACREAGE**

When the District was formed in 1935, a survey showed that not over 90,000 acres were being irrigated. As a result of the low price of land, the ability to work with their own trustees and engineers and because of some assistance from the P.F.R.A., in the creation of reservoirs, the number of acres



irrigated has increased in 1960 to slightly over 190,000. In many instances, the farmers themselves developed more land by levelling adjacent rough areas, and in other instances, the District has made land available by rebuilding old ditches and constructing new ditches, such as was done in the Rolling Hills area in 1939, 1940 and 1941.

### **P.F.R.A. ASSIST**

Through the years the District has improved the amount of water available for various parts of the Project. First by the construction of One Tree Reservoir in 1935 and Cowoki Reservoir in 1937, for which the P.F.R.A. gave assistance totalling \$15,000 and \$7,500 respectively. The District also built the Douglas Reservoir in 1938. In 1957 and 1958 the District was fortunate to have the P.F.R.A. construct the Rock Lake Reservoir southwest of Duchess.

### **SETTLEMENT OF ROLLING HILLS**

In 1939, viewing the large tracts of unused farm land in the District, and wishing to have more settlers on the water roll, the District entered into an agreement with the Government of Canada. Upon receipt of a grant of \$2.00 per developed acre, the Trustees of the District agreed to make 25,000 acres of new land available for irrigation in the Rolling Hills region. The grant was to be used to improve facilities at Lake Newell and to aid in construction of canals and ditches. This new land was to be settled by farmers from the drought areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Under this resettlement policy, some 40 settlers from various parts of Saskatchewan commenced operations in Rolling Hills in 1939, together with a like number in 1940 and 1941. It was found advisable to place sons of experienced Alberta irrigation farmers in various locations throughout the Rolling Hills Project in order to give example to the new settlers who were not familiar with irrigation. It is very commendable to note that of the 120 dry-land farmers, who settled in Rolling Hills, only three families were unable to make the transition to irrigation farming successfully. The Rolling Hills Project has served as a model for other areas in resettlement ventures.

★            ★            ★

It is worth mentioning that under the policy whereby the District issued contracts to farmers for their land, in the first fifteen years of operation, over 85% of the farmers were able to procure titles to their farms. This indicates that the original thoughts of the early Committees were sound, and is reflected in the beautiful homes and farmsteads throughout our countryside. A farmer that earns title to his land usually improves it, and he himself develops into a good citizen for his community. By paying for their farms, and building good homes under this new contract, the settlers were able to prove the soundness of their original claims. This claim was that it was unfair to burden the settlers of any irrigation project with the total capital cost of the construction of that project. Recognition of the soundness of that idea by both Provincial and Dominion authorities has resulted in low cost water rights for settlers on all new Projects constructed in Alberta by both governments since 1938.

### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY LEASE**

In an effort to diversify from grain growing, many farmers went into livestock growing as they developed their farms. The feeding and growing of livestock gave them a chance to dispose of alfalfa hay, other roughages, and feed to advantage. The pasturing of this livestock became a problem, so the idea of community leases was again developed. The first community lease was granted



to some Rosemary farmers in 1942 and since that time, some eleven community grazing leases have been developed in various parts of the Project. These leases offer summertime grazing for cattle or sheep belonging to water users of the District and have proved of great assistance to the many farmers who use them. In addition to the above, the District has granted some 100 large and small private grazing leases to other water users for livestock pasturing.

Our crop census show that cattle numbers have increased from some 25,000 head on the Project in 1940, to over 70,000 head in 1950. Coincidental with the increase in numbers of livestock, the crop census indicates we have decreased the acreage sown to wheat and naturally increased the acreage sown to tame pasture and alfalfa.

The methods of operating the District regarding water deliveries has had a considerable change over the years. In the old days, under the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, the ditchriders drove around with horse and cart and served some 20 farmers each. Under present conditions ditchriders, equipped with light-delivery trucks, cover more mileage, patrol more ditches and serve approximately 50 farmers each. The ditchriders are charged with the responsibility of representing the District to the water users, and have performed the matter very satisfactorily.

★            ★            ★

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

It has been interesting to note the progress that has taken place over the years in the matter of local or self-government in which schools, roads and taxation of lands are of paramount interest. Previous to 1948, we were in eight local improvement districts, with many of our local decisions being made in Edmonton. In 1948, the Improvement Districts were changed to a Municipality, and in 1953, the Municipality became the County of Newell and now our local problems are considered and acted on at the local level.

The improvement in the school buildings and school vans and well gravelled roads is a tribute to the diligence of the nine county councillors, who are elected by our own ratepayers from among their own numbers.

### **BROOKS MUNICIPAL HOSPITAL**

In 1941, the Brooks Hospital District was formed. The construction of a hospital in Brooks followed, which was completed and opened in September, 1943. This gave the District residents access to another excellent institution for the aid of sick or injured people and relieved, for the time being, the crowded situation which was developing in the hospital at Bassano. The willingness of men elected to the Hospital Board, to give up their time and talents in the interests of health has been of great value to the entire community.

### **TRIBUTE TO SETTLERS**

It would be very difficult to name all the old-timers who have contributed so much of their courage, confidence and energy to the successful creation of this agricultural empire. We recognize many people had an important part in this period, but have, for various reasons, left the community. We are therefore limiting our special mention to those people who worked hard for the betterment of the district and who still reside here or have descendants throughout this vicinity.



In Gem we remember Paul Royer and Henry Schriebner, and in Countess H. P. Ferguson and J. Burrows, all of whom have sons farming on or near the original homesites. In Duchess, Henry Ramer, Gabe Grosfield and the Martin family, Henry Kraus and C. P. Pierce; Rosemary, Simmons; Patricia, D. Havens; Bassano, The Ben Plumer family; Millicent, The Charlton family; Rainier, A. B. Swenson family, W. L. Graham's sons and grandsons; Scandia, John Bengtson, J. L. Johnson and the Andersons; Tilley, August Orwold and C. O. Colbens; and in Brooks, A. L. Young, James Small, Charles Bell, Robert White and W. Tait White and William Hosler. Of these old pioneers, it can be truly said that they played their part unselfishly, and helped build the foundation for homes for their families, and a successful irrigation district for the community.

The Eastern Irrigation District is an example of what can be accomplished in any new country when people, with unselfish energy and devotion to progress, work for the common good.



The ditchrider came to town.





Early school.



First wedding in Duchess.



First youngster born to settler south of Brooks. Guess who?





Ferry over the Bow River, 1919



Go anywhere in 1920

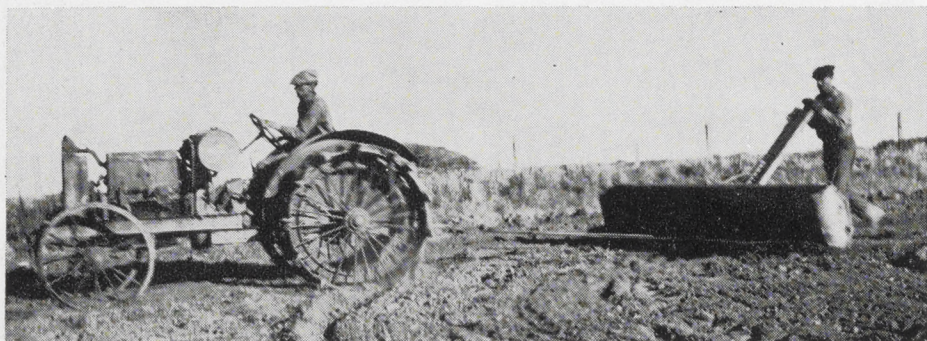




A pioneers' celebration.



Dressed turkeys for Christmas, Rainier to Brooks.

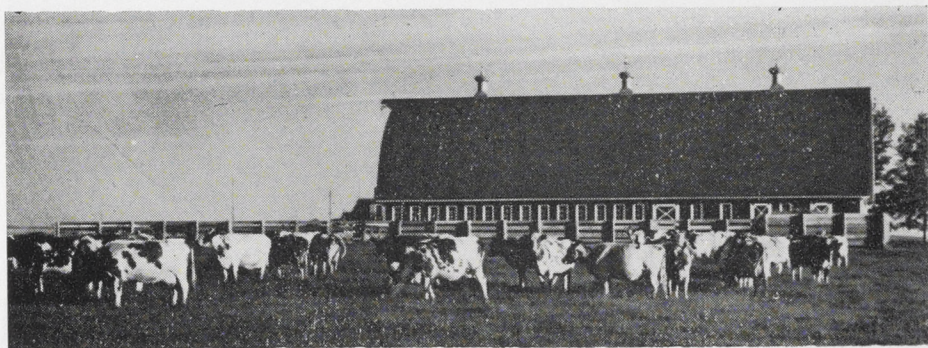


Progress in dirt moving.





Plowing, early days.



Part of A. Young's herd in 1955.



Everybody in church but the photographer. Brooks street 1923.



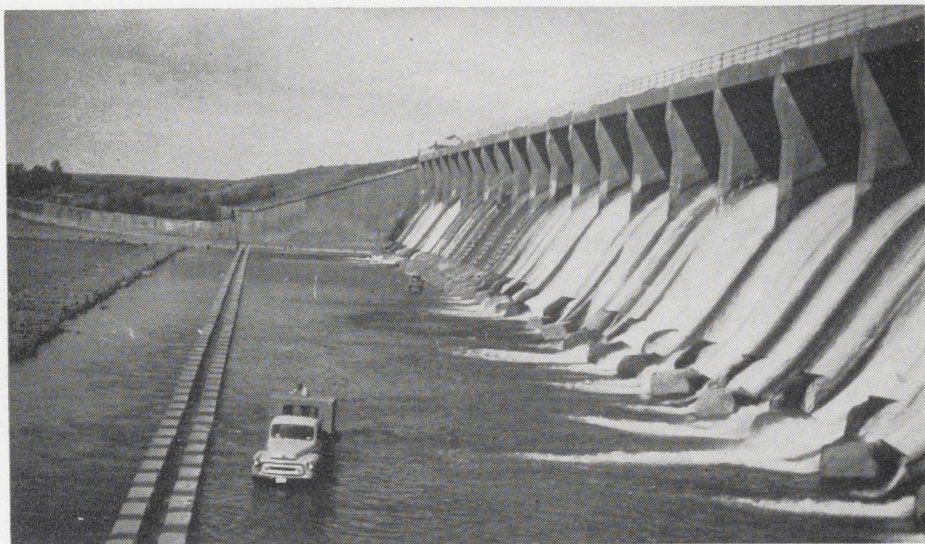


Meeting place.



C.P.R. ditchrider house, Bow Slope, 1917.



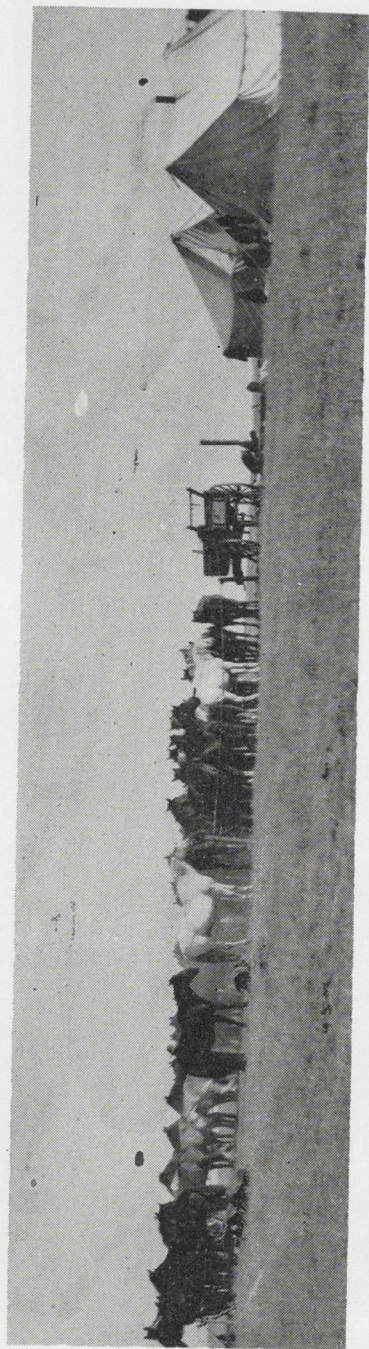


On the apron of Bassano Dam.

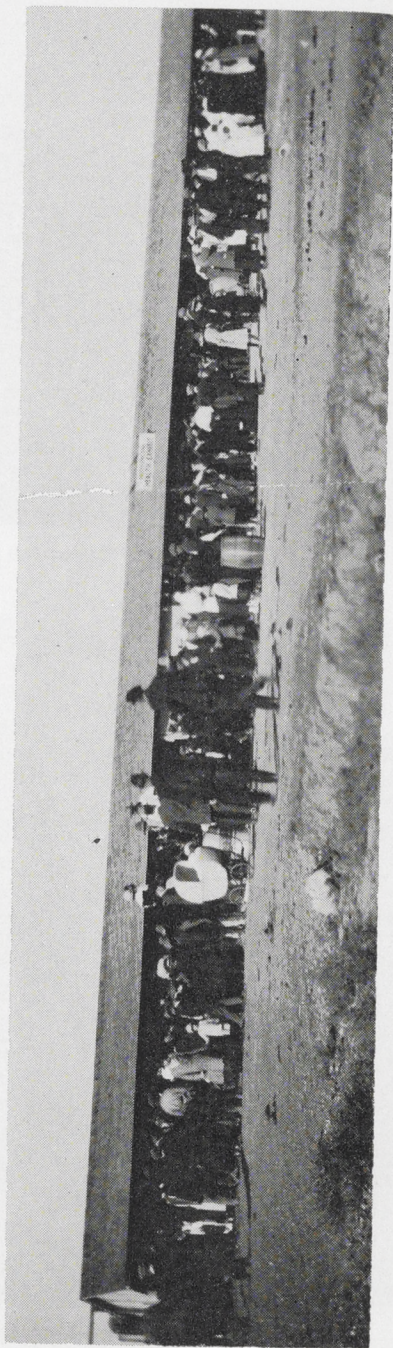


Ditchrider residence, March, 1951.



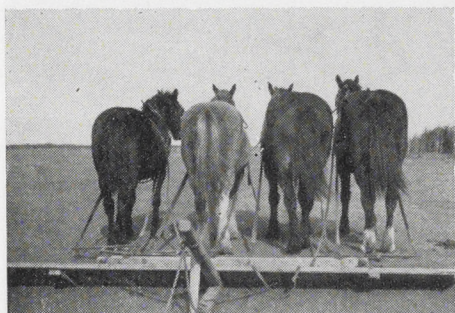


HOLDING WORK HORSES IN ROPE CORRAL.

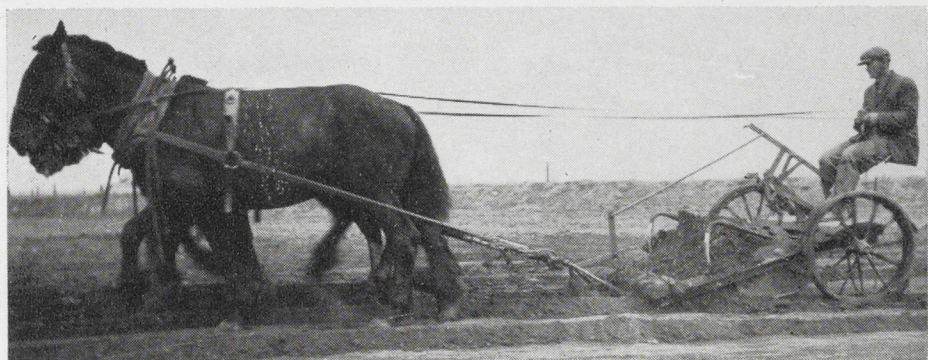


BASSANO FAIR — 1919.

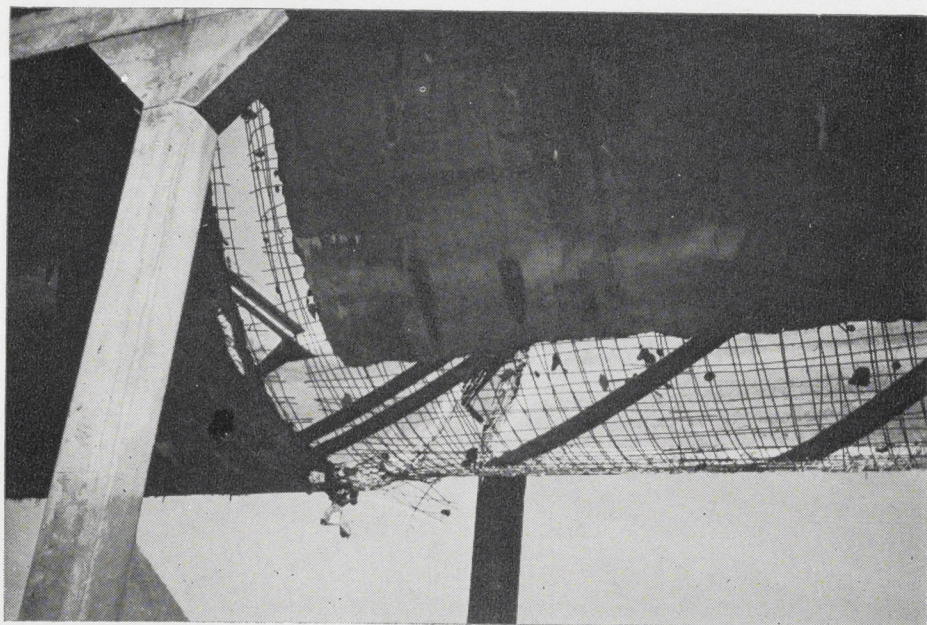
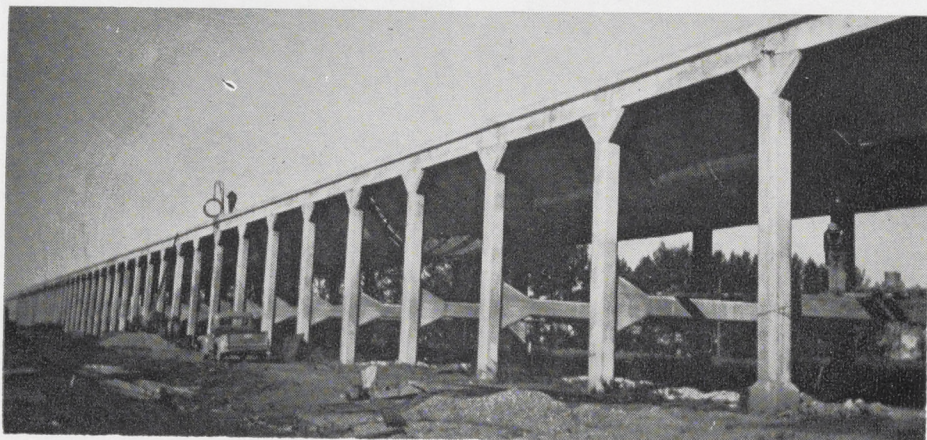
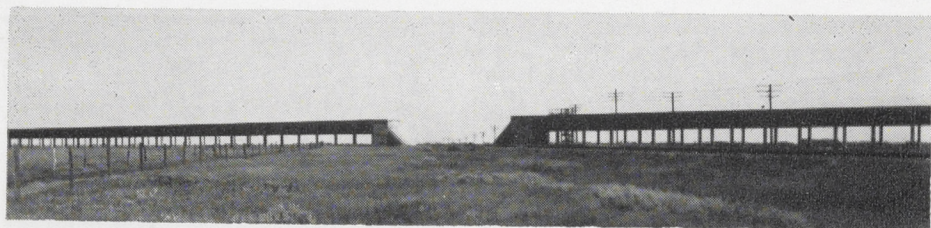




Land levelling, ridging  
and ditching.





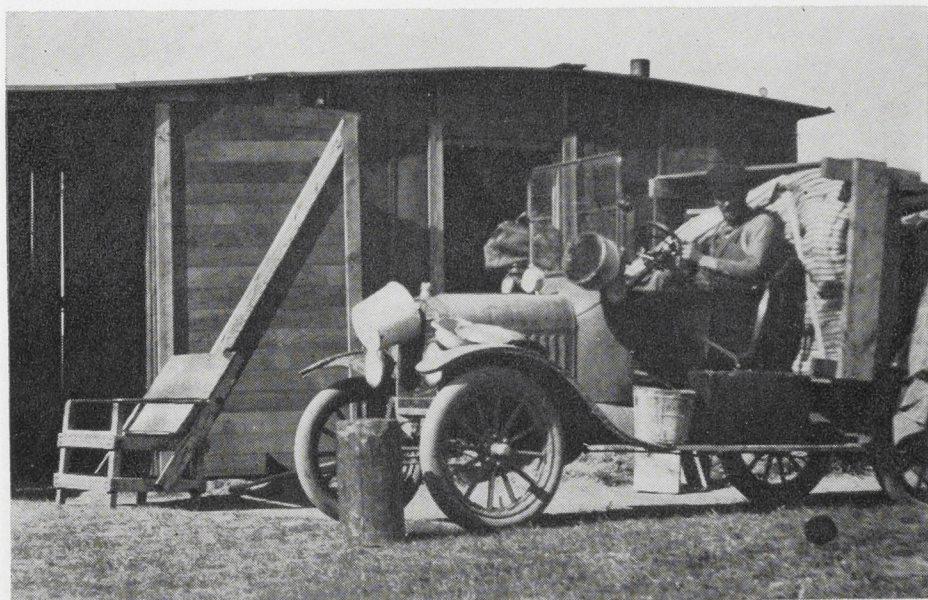


Brooks Aqueduct.





Early harvesting at Rosemary.

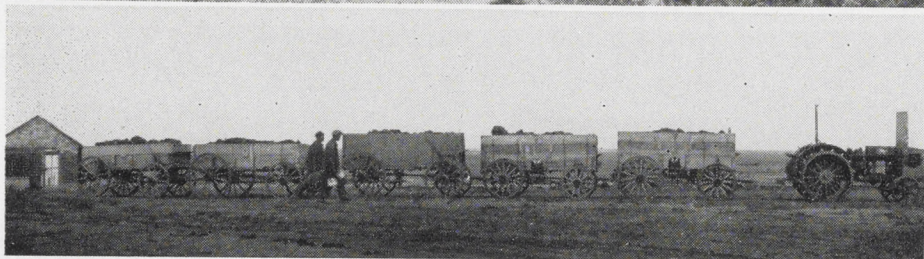


Arrival of early settler.





Before the land was irrigated.

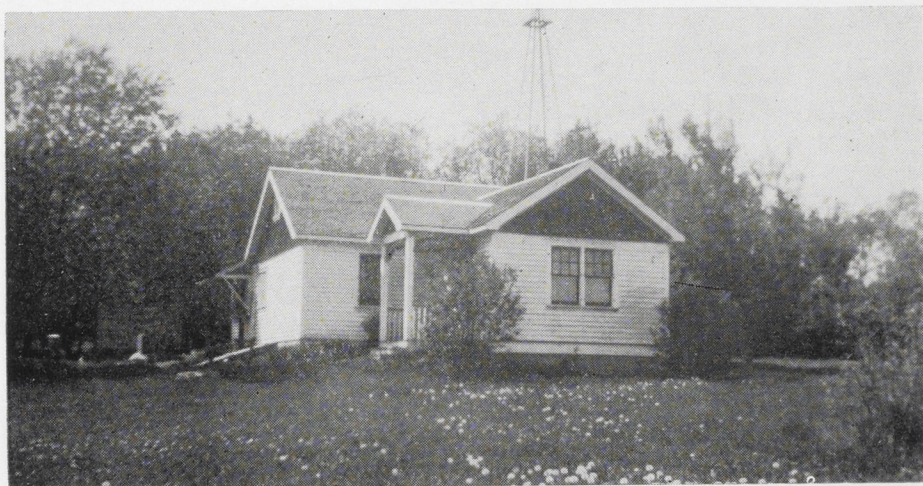


Hauling 10 tons coal — 1919, 1931 and 1947, Bow City.

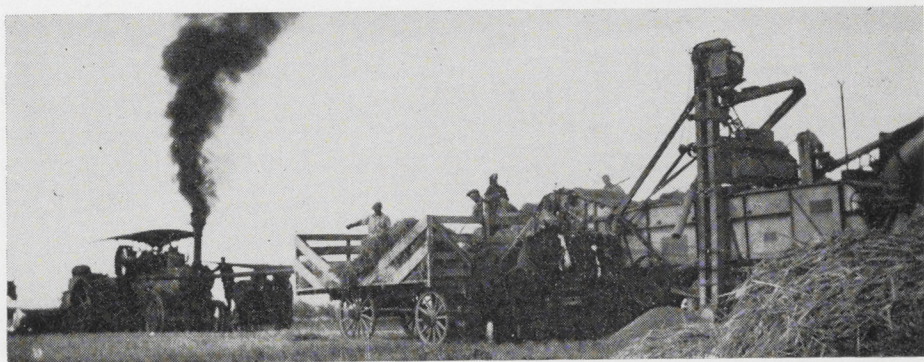




W. A. Beck, Dutchess, residence 1921.



W. A. Beck residence, 1958.



Early threshing, Dutchess, 1937.





Hog raising.



Harvesting in Gem, 1917.



Early pea growing.



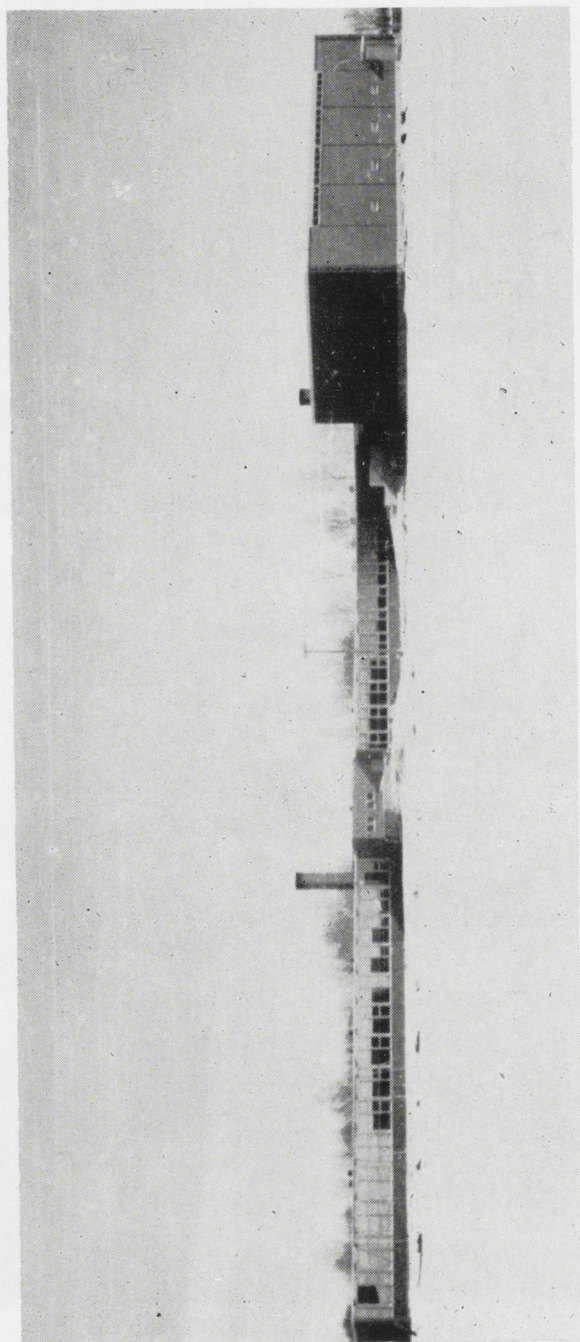


Early threshing, Rosemary.



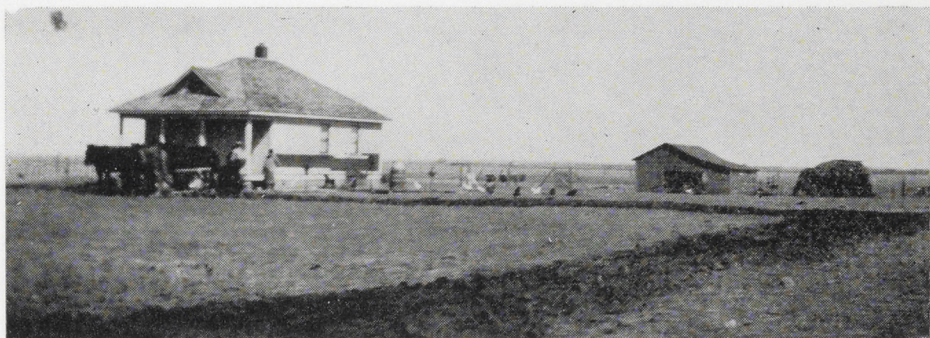
Specialty farming — 1957.





MODERN COUNTY SCHOOL SERVES DUCHESS DISTRICT.

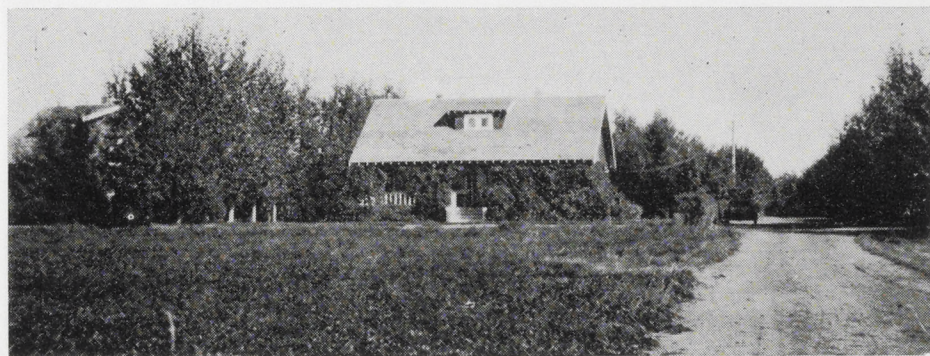




George Penner residence, Rosemary, 1932.



George Penner residence, 1942.

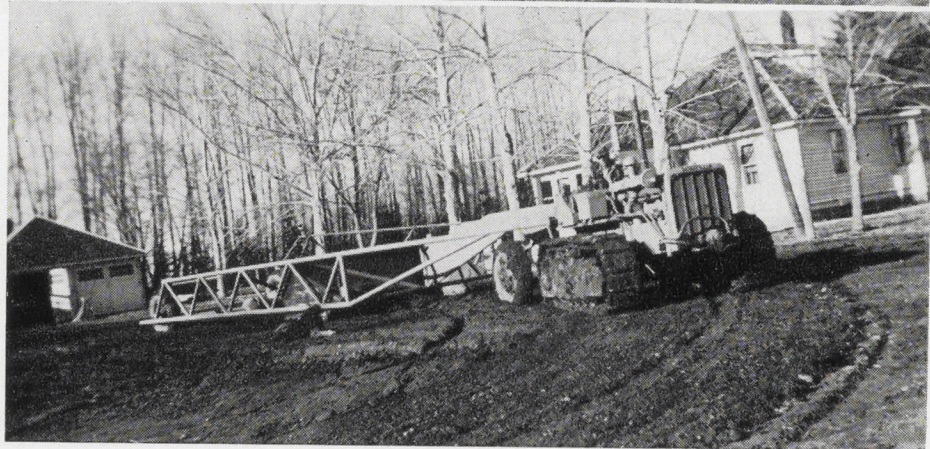
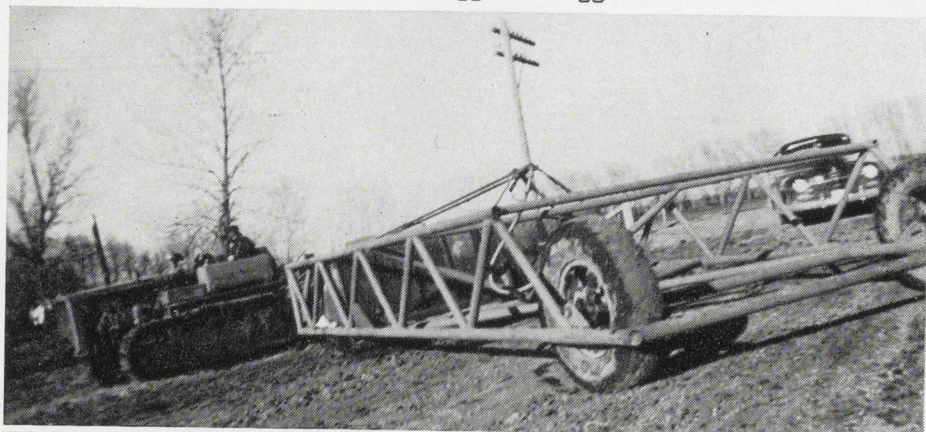


Demonstrating tree development.



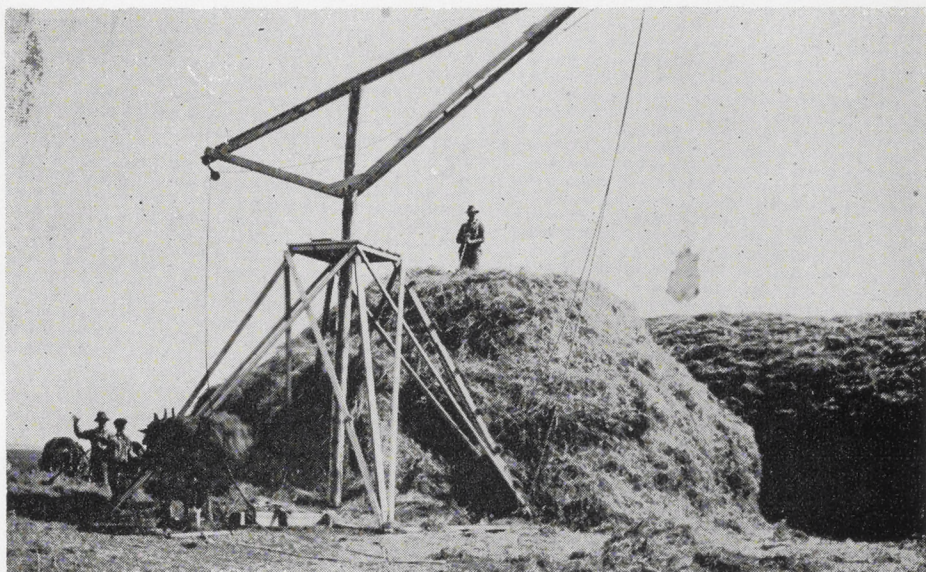


Prairie hay, 1917.



Land leveller, present day.



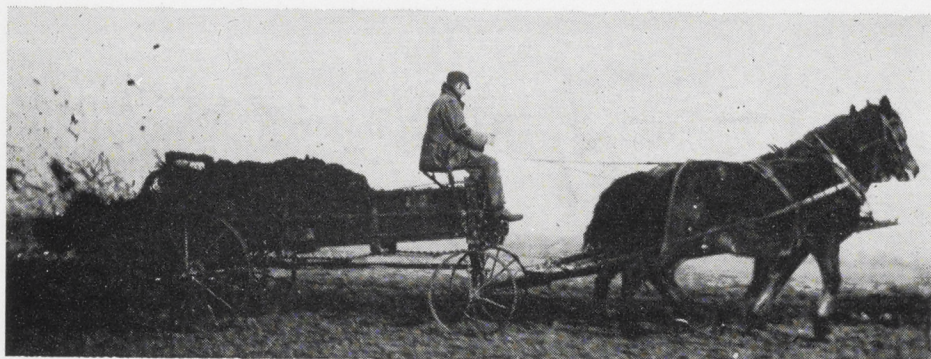


Old method of haying.



Wheat crop in Rosemary, 1919.

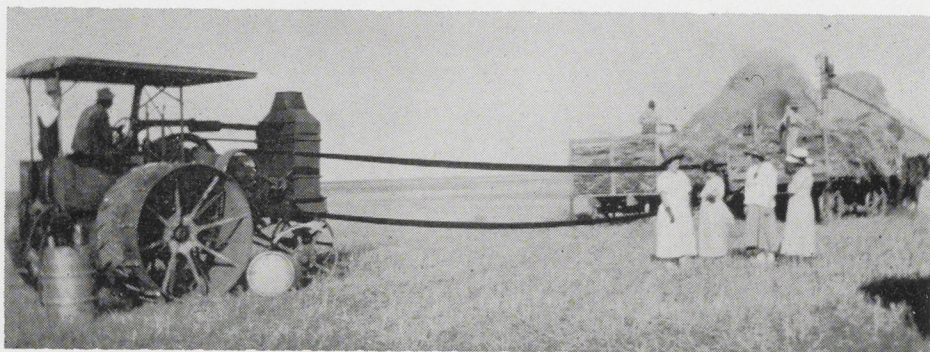




No wonder they grow good crops in Duchess!



Duke of Sutherland cattle.



Threshing — Rosemary, 1919.





Modern day sports, Brooks.



J. L. Johnson residence, Scandia.



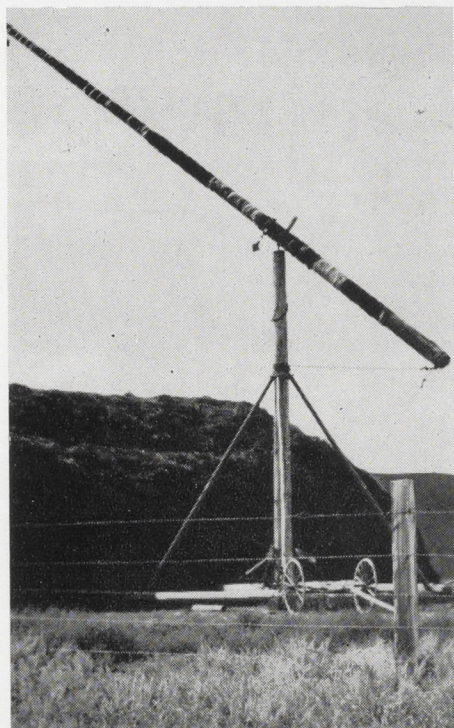


PRODUCTS OF IRRIGATION.





First school, Duchess.



Early haying at George Lane's,  
Bow City.



First settlers in Duchess, Mr. and  
Mrs. S. B. Ramer.





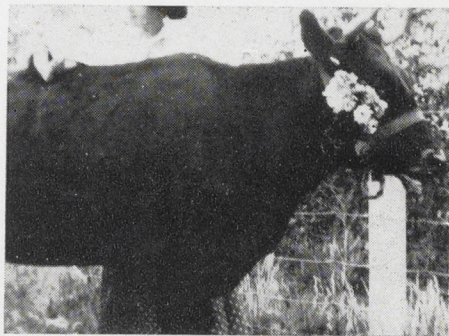
Potato crop, Rosemary, 1916.



Breaking the prairie.

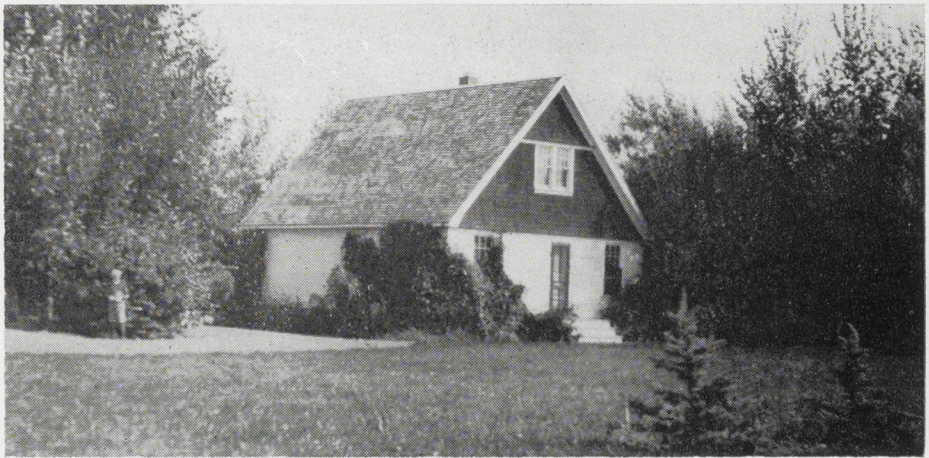
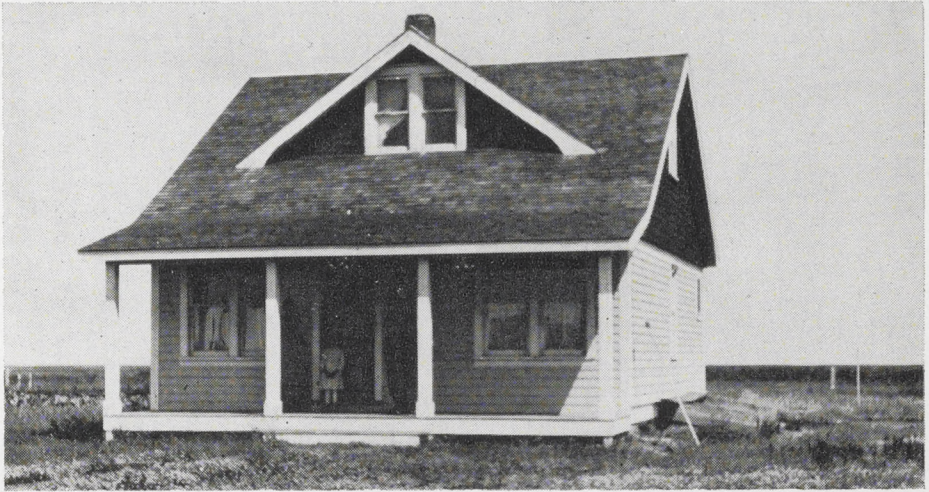
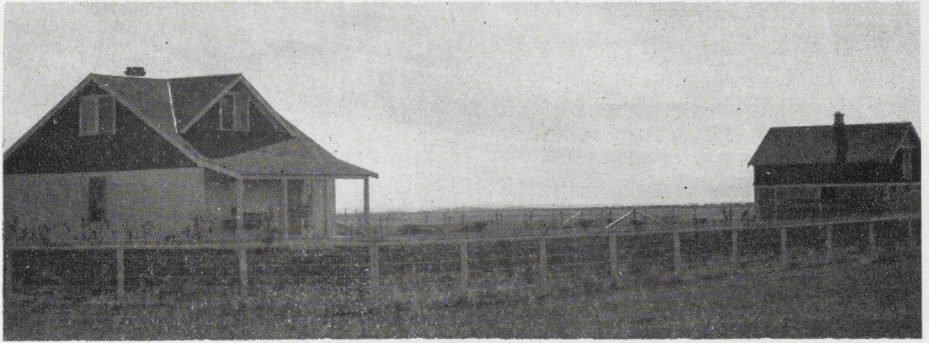


Road grading in the 30's.



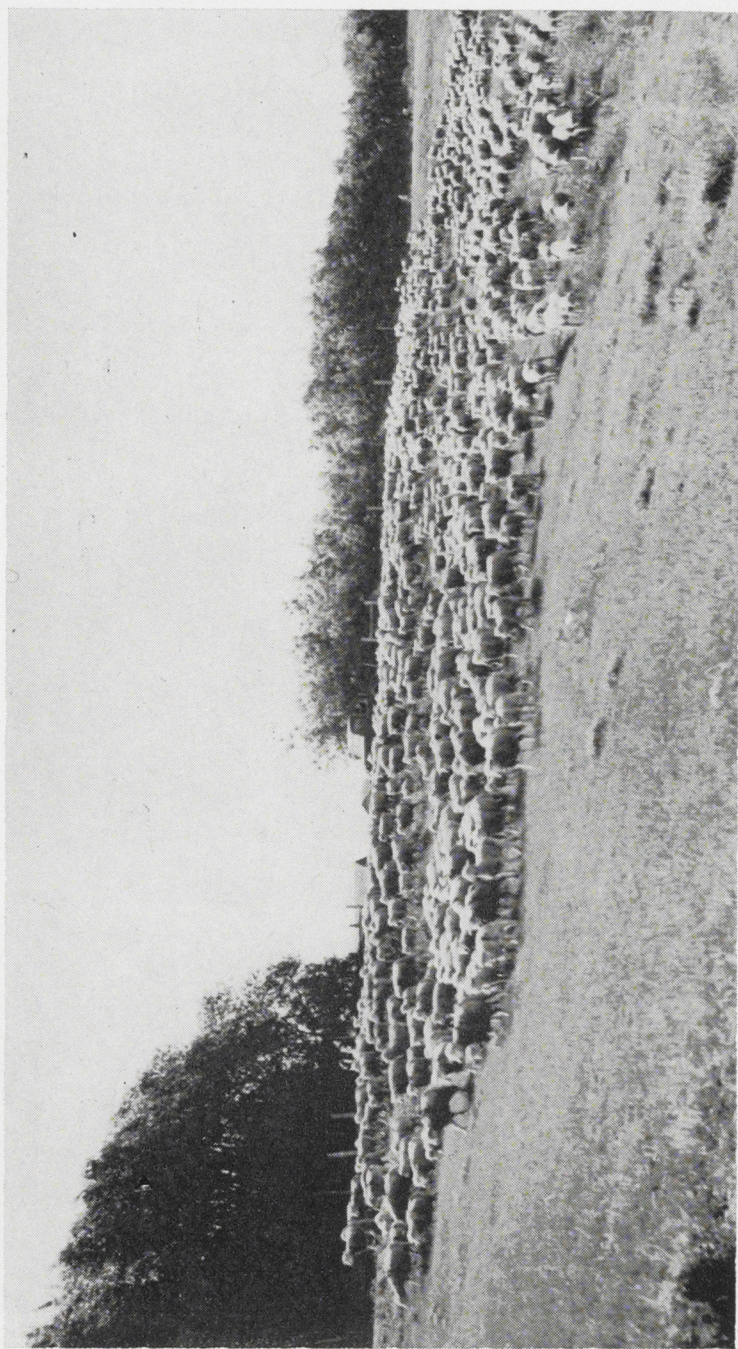
A. L. Young's first milk cow, 1915.





Home and grounds development.





SHEEP FEEDING IN THE E.I.D.



**PROGRAMME**  
OF THE  
**FIRST ANNUAL STAFF CONFERENCE**  
Canadian Pacific Railway Co., Department of Natl Resources.  
Engineering Branch  
**EASTERN SECTION.**

to be held at

**BROOKS . ALBERTA.**

on  
OCTOBER 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>  
**1920**

(6)





# Acknowledgements



Pictures for the E.I.D. History were received from the following:

George Penner, Rosemary.

Mrs. E. R. Heidt, Rolling Hills.

James Small, Brooks.

Gordon Westgate, Bow City.

Mrs. Henry Dahl, Calgary.

Jock Sewall, Brooks.

J. L. Johnson, Scandia.

R. E. Anderson, Scandia.

C. P. Pierce, Duchess.

C. O. Colbens, Tilley.

Henry Romer, Duchess.

Robert Scott, Tilley.

C. Oldenburg, Bassano.

J. Steventon, Brooks.

A. L. Young, Brooks.

George Philpott, Brooks.

Clarence Bengtson, Scandia.







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